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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Fifty-fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1337th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 4 August 1999 at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. ABOUL-NASR

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

PREVENTION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, INCLUDING EARLY WARNING MEASURES AND URGENT ACTION PROCEDURES (agenda item 3)

Situation in Kosovo

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the recent alarming reports from Kosovo, including the massacre of innocent people and the burning of churches, made it imperative for the Committee to make its views felt. He suggested that a small working group, led by Mr. Banton, should draw up a statement which the Committee would consider at a later meeting.

2. It was so decided.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 4) (continued)

Twelfth to fifteenth periodic reports of Romania (continued) (CERD/C/363/Add.1; HRI/CORE/1/Add.13/Rev.1)

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the delegation of Romania resumed their places at the Committee table.

4. Mr. SHERIFIS asked whether the Romanian Government had considered accepting the amendment to article 8.6 of the Convention, dealing with the financing of the Committee's activities. The Romanian delegation had stated that it had already signed the Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms which allowed individuals to bring complaints to the European Court of Human Rights. Romania should, therefore, have no difficulty in making the corresponding declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention.

5. He asked for more information about the participation of national minorities in the executive branch of government, including the civil service. For instance, were the Roma represented in the cabinet or at high level in the diplomatic service? He also wished to know how the Government sought to increase awareness of the provisions of the Convention among the general public, as opposed to merely making it available in libraries or among the legal profession.

6. As indicated in the Committee's previous concluding observations concerning Romania (contained in document A/50/18), he hoped that the Government would take note of the Committee's General Recommendation XIII on the training of law enforcement officials in the protection of human rights and its General Recommendation XVII on the establishment of national institutions to facilitate the implementation of the Convention. Had any such institution been established in Romania?

7. There were some statements in the report of Romania (CERD/C/363/Add.1) which he found completely unacceptable. Paragraph 133, for example, contained a number of sweeping generalizations about Roma people's alleged lack of interest in going to school and learning a trade and their preference for

"own-account, very often illegal, activities". Such statements were, frankly, offensive and he hoped they would not appear in Romania's future reports. Overall, however, he considered the report a positive one and welcomed the constructive and fruitful dialogue between the Committee and the Romanian delegation.

8. Mr. RECHETOV commended Romania's regular reporting, the high quality of the report and especially the delegation's frank descriptions of the actual situation in the country. The delegation should not be discouraged by the many points raised by members - after all, the Committee was aiming at an ideal, namely full implementation of the Convention in every respect. The report took full note of the Committee's comments on earlier reports, and attempted to respond to the concerns raised. It openly described the sometimes difficult relations between ethnic groups, particularly the strong national feelings current among the larger minority groups, which sometimes seemed to verge on disloyalty to the State. He agreed with Mr. Sherifis that the Committee could not approve of some of the language used in the report to describe the Roma population, although Romania was by no means the only State party to display the same paternalistic and critical attitude.

9. Mr. YUTZIS (Country Rapporteur) gave the sources of the information he had used for his questions at the previous meeting. They included: Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International; Human Rights Brief, published by the Centre for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Washington College of Law; an article in the Balkan Neighbors Newsletter No. 5, 1997, entitled "The image of the national minorities in the Romanian Press, October 1996-March 1997": "Images and issues: Coverage of the Roma in the mass media in Romania"; and the proceedings of a symposium held in Sinaia, Romania in June 1997.

10. Ms. VRANCEANU (Romania), answering members' questions about the status of the judiciary, said that Chapter III of the Constitution and the Act on the Organization of the Judicial System of 1992 clearly stated that the judiciary was entirely separate from all other State authorities. Judges and prosecutors were nominated by the Supreme Council of the Judiciary and confirmed by presidential decree. Judges could only be transferred to other posts with their consent. In cases of professional incompetence, a judge could be removed from his or her duties by the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, at the request of the Ministry of Justice.

11. Prosecutors also enjoyed security of tenure. The Prosecutor's Department was independent of all other public authorities. Its tasks included conducting and/or monitoring criminal proceedings, directing police inquiries, calling upon judicial bodies to consider criminal cases, ensuring compliance with the law in the execution of court judgements, enforcing the law relating to prisons and centres for preventive detention, rehabilitation and security, studying the causes of crime and proposing ways of reducing crime levels. The Prosecutor's Department had the authority to direct the activities of law enforcement officers.

12. Turning to the question of freedom of the press, she said that the press in Romania was independent of the State but, being governed by commercial interests, it was likely to cover sensational subjects. The Government could

take no responsibility for declarations by former political leaders who were now in opposition, and such statements in no way corresponded to the Government's own views.

13. The Government recognized the need to combat negative attitudes in the media. Act No. 41/1994 on the organization and functioning of the Romanian Radio Corporation, prohibited any broadcasts which might incite people to racial hatred or discrimination. Nevertheless, much remained to be done, particularly to improve the image presented by the media of the Hungarian and Roma minorities and to prevent the expression of anti-Semitic sentiments. The Government had organized a number of seminars in collaboration with the Council of Europe, which were described in the report (CERD/C/363/Add.1, para. 165). Radio and television broadcasters were not civil servants, but enjoyed the same status as journalists.

14. Members had asked about incidents of anti-Semitism. There were isolated examples, which the authorities were doing their best to suppress. There had been some talk of rehabilitating Marshal Ion Antonescu, a leader of the Iron Guard group in the 1940s, but no official action had ever been taken. The Iron Guard had never been officially registered as a party or association in Romania.

15. Political parties which propagated racist ideas or indulged in racist activities were banned by Act No. 27/1996 on political parties and by article 30 (7) of the Constitution. The Prosecutor's Department was obliged to institute criminal proceedings against journalists or politicians who expressed racist opinions. As yet, there was no law which specifically prohibited racial discrimination, but the Department for the Protection of National Minorities was preparing a draft law on the elimination of all forms of discrimination based on race, nationality, language, ethnic origin or religious belief. A Bucharest court was currently considering a case against the Partidul Romania Mare (Greater Romania Party) because of its alleged racist activities.

16. The document on education in Romania that had been distributed to Committee members at the previous meeting contained full information on teaching in the national minority languages. The Bulgarian minority, specifically, had five schools with a total of 460 pupils, and a Bulgarian lycée would reopen in the course of the year.

17. With reference to paragraph 30 (d) of the report, it should be added that the Government had in fact taken action, on the basis of its own legislation, against persons and organizations accused of acts of racial discrimination. Concerning the issue of compensation for injury suffered by a person by reason of race (report, para. 163), the last sentence of the paragraph should have specified that the civil courts had received no requests for such compensation. Elsewhere, the report (paras. 66-78) clearly indicated that the criminal courts had indeed ordered compensation in a number of cases.

18. Under article 11 of the Constitution, the provisions of the Convention could be invoked directly in all Romanian courts. Moreover, under article 144 of the Constitution, the Constitutional Court could, ex officio or at the request of the executive, legislative or judicial powers, rule on the

constitutionality of any law, either before or after it was promulgated. Under the same article, the Court could pronounce, at the request of a judge, on the constitutionality of an existing law affecting a case in progress, which was suspended until it issued its ruling.

19. Regarding the activities of the police force, the Government offered continuing training in human rights to police officers, especially new recruits. It was a priority of the Ministry of Justice to ensure the impartiality of judges and to increase public confidence in the police force. It also offered seminars and produced television and radio broadcasts and articles in the press to inform the public of its right to bring complaints of racial discrimination.

20. There were no restrictions on the ground of ethnic origin under Act No. 112 providing for the restitution of property nationalized or confiscated under the Communist regime.

21. Concerning unfair dismissals of employees for racial reasons, the Labour Code permitted dismissals only on well-founded grounds, and any unfair dismissal could consequently be contested in court. The same applied to the denial of a job on racial grounds. Chapter II of the Constitution granted all citizens free access to the justice system and the right to compensation for injuries suffered. There were offices of labour inspectors in all 41 districts in Romania, and in each of them an inspector dealt with Roma issues.

22. Mr. MOLDOVAN (Romania) said that under Communism, to the detriment of human rights, there had been no tradition of a People's Advocate or Ombudsman. The Office of Ombudsman had been provided for under the new 1991 Constitution in three articles of Chapter I on Fundamental Rights, Freedoms and Duties of Citizens, which outlined its role, structure and relations with Parliament and other authorities. Immediately after the enactment of the Ombudsman Act (Act No. 35/1997), the Senate had appointed the first Ombudsman, adopted the Office's rules of procedure and appointed three Deputy Ombudsmen.

23. The Ombudsman Act gave the Ombudsman the jurisdiction to protect the rights and freedoms of citizens only in relation to executive authorities and bodies; it had no jurisdiction in relation to the legislative or judicial branches. He and his deputies accordingly enjoyed the independence of executive power needed to safeguard their watchdog function. The Office accepted no anonymous complaints and none concerning facts going back further than one year. It could act at the request of any individual regardless of citizenship and without distinction whatsoever, but not of groups or organizations; it could, however, act ex officio on the basis of information provided, for example, by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Its powers included investigating complaints, holding hearings, obtaining statements, having access to documentation even from confidential government sources, addressing requests to the Prosecutor-General, the Supreme Court or the Council of the Judiciary, issuing recommendations to public authorities, making reports on any illegalities uncovered, and ordering public officials to revise or revoke an illegal act and make reparations, with the possibility, in cases of non-compliance, of applying to various higher authorities for enforcement of the measure ordered, according to a strict timetable.

24. The Office of the Ombudsman was independent but had to submit an annual report to Parliament. It was divided into four departments, one of which - headed by himself as Deputy Ombudsman - supervised issues relating to the police force, prison conditions, consumer and taxpayer rights, minorities, aliens and refugees, religious establishments and the mass media. A highly-trained Roma sociologist and economist held a top position dealing with the minority issues.

25. The number of complaints received by the Ombudsman had risen from about 1,000 in 1997 to about 3,000 in the first six months of 1999, the year in which the Office had become fully operational. Initially, about 90 per cent of the complaints had fallen outside the jurisdiction of the Office and had had to be referred elsewhere, but as the public became better informed about its functions, that figure had dropped to 70 per cent in 1999. In the cases where it was competent, the Office's caseload had risen from fewer than 100 in 1997 to over 400 in the first six months of 1999. Only a few of those complaints had alleged racial discrimination, although the number had risen since 1999. Complaints were received from members of the national minorities as well as from minority aliens living in the country. Minority citizens complained mainly about police abuses and property issues, particularly in the case of the Roma, who claimed they were being denied land rights by corrupt local officials. The complaints submitted by aliens, most of whom were in the country legally, often had to do with treatment in detention for suspected offences; others, the more educated among them, had applied for citizenship and asked the Ombudsman to speed matters up, or they alleged unfair employment restrictions.

26. In answer to questions raised about discrimination in employment, it should be noted that article 2 of the Labour Code specified that all citizens, without distinction, had the right to work in all fields according to their professional qualifications; and article 130 specified the conditions for dismissal from employment, none of which were based on race.

27. As to the information provided to the people about human rights and their own individual rights, the Ombudsman himself appeared often on radio and television and wrote articles for the press. His Office, with help from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had published human rights brochures and, in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Romanian Ministry of National Education, had produced a human rights manual for use in secondary schools. With the Office of Consumer Protection, it was planning to set up information centres in the country's various districts and departments. National bodies working in the same field, such as the Romanian Human Rights Institute attached to the Chamber of Deputies, also published books on human rights, including one written by a member of the Committee, Mr. Diaconu, and provided advisory services in the field.

28. Regarding the languages in which the Convention was published, all treaties to which Romania was a party, including the Convention, were published in the Official Gazette in Romanian and Hungarian and, before 1990, in German as well.

29. In 1992, Romania and Germany had indeed concluded an agreement on the readmission of members of their respective national minorities who had been expelled as illegal immigrants by the other State. Romania was obliged by its own Constitution to readmit such persons. In 1998, a further agreement had been concluded between Romania and Germany on the readmission of illegal stateless persons.

30. Mr. OPRESCU (Romania), speaking as head of the National Roma Office under the Department for the Protection of National Minorities, observed that the delegation had not produced the report submitted to the Committee. His own Department had been very critical of the report, especially the parts dealing with the Roma, and he himself found paragraphs 133, 59 and 54 particularly objectionable.

31. The Government was, however, paying serious attention to the status of the Roma, along with other issues involving the Hungarian minority, because Romania's entry into the European institutions was contingent upon them. According to the 1992 census, there were 409,000 self-declared Roma in the country. More important than their numbers, however, was their political clout, which was negligible compared to that of other national minorities like the Hungarians, who, for example, were represented by 25 Deputies and 11 Senators, as opposed to one Roma Deputy elected only as a result of affirmative action.

32. The historical background, too, was an important factor. The Roma, many of them formerly held in slavery, had benefited from the emancipation movement in Romania, which had been completed by 1856, but most had been left landless and in poverty. It was also noticeable that, unlike many other communities, they had not tended to migrate. Only some 40 per cent of the Roma in the country currently spoke Romany, compared with over 90 per cent in Bulgaria and some other neighbouring countries. The release of the Roma forcibly arrested in the mid-eighteenth century had been contingent on their relinquishing their language and traditional dress. On the question whether the term Roma was appropriate, many clearly preferred it to the term Gypsy, which was widely regarded as pejorative, although that was less true in the western part of the country. Some evolution might well take place with regard to the preferred term, but the matter was surely one for the community itself to decide.

33. Cases of excessive use of force by police against Roma groups had indeed occurred, as could be seen, inter alia, in the report of the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest; but others had suffered likewise and there was no evidence at all of deliberate State action against specific groups. Nevertheless, the Government had heeded the problem and taken remedial steps. For instance, as a result of restructuring measures in the Ministries of Defence and the Interior, there was a new generation of senior officers, mostly trained abroad, for example in Denmark and the United Kingdom. He had no knowledge of any police handbook containing material biased against the Roma, and doubted very much whether such a textbook existed.

34. Contrary to certain suggestions, Roma representation in crime statistics was low rather than high. The problem was one of perception rather than reality, since the Roma were generally more noticeable. That factor applied

likewise to immigration; for example, an analysis, in France, of migration patterns from Romania revealed that the Roma accounted for barely 5 per cent.

35. It was felt that progress could be made only through a coordinated policy of affirmative action. To that end, an interministerial committee had been formed, including a subcommission on the Roma, which he chaired. Some ministries had already responded positively. For example, the Ministry of Education was developing programmes of affirmative action for the Roma, which included not only provision of university places but also preparation schemes for candidates; a relevant Website had been set up. The Ministry of Culture was likewise very active in developing suitable strategies. The Ministry of the Interior - a ministry always in the line of fire for criticism, often admittedly deserved - was undergoing needful reforms in which much heartening goodwill was evident, especially at higher and intermediate levels. Unfortunately, some ministries were reluctant to act. For example, the Minister of Labour took the view that affirmative action was but another form of discrimination, despite having been referred to the obligations stemming from the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

36. The cited incidence of violence against the Roma seemed to have been largely linked to political activities. The period of highest tension in that regard had coincided with a time of coalition with nationalist and extremist parties, the resulting political climate making any perceived support for the Roma unpopular. It was noticeable, too, that the pattern of violence had ceased after the 1996 elections. In general, it was still too easy, in a population of strongly agrarian tradition, to incite prejudice against minorities of any sort. That was why the Department for the Protection of National Minorities strongly campaigned against all forms of discrimination, although its latest programme, completed in 1998, still encountered opposition.

37. The questions about the structure of his department and the National Roma Office would be better replied to in writing, if the Committee so agreed.

38. One of the innovative features of the interministerial committee on the Roma, mentioned earlier, was that it provided for the full participation of Roma representatives. That community, although poorly represented politically, had produced one or two outstanding figures. For that reason, it was gratifying that Roma representatives were available to provide a valuable input to the efforts to draft a suitable national programme.

39. He hoped that the members of the Committee could help the Romanian authorities in their efforts to strengthen compliance with the Convention, bearing in mind that observance of such instruments needed to be backed by coherent policies and action for the true protection and promotion of national minorities, for which some guidance was needed. Funds were available, as could be seen, inter alia, from the budget allocations recorded in the country's Official Gazette, as was programme funding to the tune of some €2 million; but advice and recommendations were urgently required in order to make optimum use of the resources available. For example, in 1977 a fund of US$ 500,000 had been made available, but the capacity of absorption had been

so low that rational spending had been impossible. Efforts were being made to develop a database, and advice was being gleaned from sources such as UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), including information on ways to ensure that funds were directed to local projects. But the real shortages were in people and programmes.

40. Instances of harassment and oppression still occurred in some Roma communities; but one complicating factor was that they tended to retain backward attitudes which manifested themselves, for example, in the oppression of women. The task, therefore, was to counter such attitudes while aiming to protect the community's language and traditions.

41. As to why the situation of the Roma showed up so badly in certain social indicators and statistics, he said that some sociologists had shaped their field research to reach conclusions in line with their own personal views. One quite influential sociologist had a theory revolving around pockets of poverty, and concentrated his studies on the dismal situation of what he called "compact" Roma communities, where the illiteracy rate stood at 80 per cent and nine tenths of the population was unemployed. Such communities were not typical in Romania, where most Roma lived among the Hungarian minority or Romanian majority.

42. Mr. GAVRILESCU (Romania), addressing the question of the concept of the nation-State, said that Romania was a nation-State insofar as there was a single Romanian nation. That was not at variance with the existence and identity of groups having different origins. Under the Constitution, the Romanian State was the common and indivisible motherland of all its citizens, regardless of their race, ethnic origin, language or religion, a principle reflected in the fact that the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR) was represented in the Government.

43. Although Romania recognized the existence of national minorities and guaranteed their rights, it did not define the concept of "national minority". No generally accepted definition existed, and indeed the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities itself contained no such definition.

44. Turning to the question of general and local elections, the 1996 and prior elections had included the participation of legally established minority groups. The UDMR had won 25 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 11 in the Senate. Candidates from other minority groups failed to muster the necessary number of votes for normal election to Parliament, but the Constitution and the Chamber of Deputies and Senate Elections Act contained affirmative action provisions for the direct parliamentary participation of the best-placed candidate of such national minority organizations, provided they were legally incorporated, took part in the elections and received a number of votes equal to 5 per cent of the nationwide average number of votes cast for the election of deputies. The 15 groups listed in annex 1 to the report were thus entitled to seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and they had established their own parliamentary group, separate from that of the UDMR. In local elections, such organizations had won 151 mayorships and numerous seats as local councillors.

45. Representatives of national minority groups were both elected and appointed to the Parliament, the Government, the various ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and local bodies.

46. A national debate on the teaching of history and geography in minority languages had resulted in a compromise being incorporated into the 1995 Education Act. When primary education was dispensed in minority languages, Romanian history and geography were taught in the minority language, following programmes and using textbooks identical to those used for teaching in Romanian, with the proviso that place names and proper names should be taught in Romanian as well. In secondary education, Romanian history and geography were taught in Romanian, following programmes and using the same textbooks as those used in Romanian-language schools. Examinations were always administered in the language of instruction.

47. The Government had submitted a bill to Parliament calling for acceptance of the amendment to article 8, paragraph 6, of the Convention, and had also submitted a bill aimed at making the declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention.

48. Mr. YUTZIS (Country Rapporteur) said that the high quality of the Romanian delegation's replies and the valuable exchange which had taken place amply justified the practice - initially introduced by the Committee itself - of inviting delegations to attend the meetings of treaty bodies when their country reports were to be discussed. The delegation had answered questions relating to the application of legal norms, had provided a great deal of information on the nature and scope of the Ombudsman's Office as well as its constraints, and had given a very important and interesting presentation on the problems of minorities, and in particular of the Roma people. It had also shed light on such important matters as the definition of the State. The Committee had just been officially informed of the submission of two important bills to Parliament.

49. It was crucial to establish the number of people belonging to the Roma minority. The problem of the Roma community was not simply an important matter in relations between Romania and the rest of Europe, but was above all vital for Romania itself. The market economy prevailing throughout the world was causing increasing disparities between the rich and the poor, and the State was neglecting vulnerable groups, leaving them to the whims of the private sector - a dangerous trend, both per se and in terms of how it was perceived politically. Throughout the world, more skills were being demanded of workers. Among people deprived of education, the proportion unable to find work was thus rising. For any society, and for any country, that was a time bomb which had to be defused. According to paragraph 133 of the report, the introduction of positive discrimination with regard to jobs would not be possible until the persons in question acquired a minimum level of occupational knowledge and general culture. Surely that would result in a vicious circle, whereby those most in need of skills would be denied the education they needed to find employment?

50. Having heard the constructive exchange with the Romanian delegation and the delegation's expressed will to effect change, he had the hope that Romania was headed in the right direction.

51. Ms. VRANCEANU (Romania) thanked the Committee for its attention and its very useful observations, which would be examined carefully. The next report would provide any information not included in the delegation's oral answers.

52. The CHAIRMAN thanked the Romanian delegation for its most informative report and replies.

53. The members of the delegation of Romania withdrew.

Review of the implementation of the Convention in States parties whose reports are excessively overdue

Antigua and Barbuda

54. The CHAIRMAN recalled that Antigua and Barbuda had not yet submitted an initial report. The case of Antigua and Barbuda exemplified the plight of small countries which did not have a mission in Geneva and were unable to send a delegation to the Committee, and underscored the need for the Committee to meet periodically in New York. In the absence of the country's delegation, he invited the Country Rapporteur to report to the Committee on implementation of the Convention in that State.

55. Mrs. SADIQ ALI explained that the Committee at its fifty-second session had, at the request of the State party, agreed to postpone consideration of the initial report of Antigua and Barbuda. Although no initial report had been submitted to the Committee, a report had been submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/ANT/1-3), from which she had drawn some information.

56. The State of Antigua and Barbuda, located in the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean, had been governed by the Antigua Labour Party since 1976 and had acceded to independence from the United Kingdom in 1984. As a small island State, the country lacked financial and human resources. Its population of 64,000 was primarily (85 per cent) of African slave descent, the remainder being descended from British settlers and Portuguese labourers imported in the nineteenth century. It had taken in some 3,500 residents of Montserrat fleeing the volcanic eruptions. The Government reportedly assessed all claims by refugees in accordance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. There had been no reports of forced expulsion of persons having valid claims to refugee status.

57. Concerning article 2 of the Convention, the country's Constitution prohibited any law which was discriminatory either in and of itself or in its effect, and there was a national law which prohibited discrimination based on race, sex, creed, language or social status. Could the relevant texts be provided? Social discrimination and violence against women continued to be problems. Was there any legislation against domestic violence? It would be of interest to receive detailed information on the programme implemented by the Directorate of Women's Affairs to shelter abused women and children and to increase awareness of such problems among persons in the health, law enforcement and counselling professions.

58. Had Antigua and Barbuda ratified the Convention without any reservations? That applied particularly to article 4, which was mandatory.

59. With regard to article 5, the Constitution provided for an independent judiciary. The judicial system was part of the eastern Caribbean judicial system, and the Privy Council in London served as the final court of appeal, in particular in cases involving the death sentence. The Constitution provided that criminal defendants should receive a fair, open and public trial. There were no reports of political prisoners. Conditions in the prison system, which had seen rioting, had improved after it was privatized by the Government in November 1997. There were about 190 prisoners and 38 prison officials. The Constitution ensured freedom of speech and of the press, but access by opposition parties to the electronic media was reportedly restricted and there continued to be allegations of censorship. It would be appreciated if some explanation could be provided.

60. With reference to education and training (art. 5.e (v)), document CEDAW/C/ANT/1-3 reflected Antigua and Barbuda's emphasis on the importance of education for development, with an increase in the national budget allocation for education, and included an estimate of the literacy rate of 88.7 per cent, but did not provide separate figures for women and men. Could such figures be provided?

61. With regard to employment (art. 5.e (i)), 45.5 per cent of the 26,783 persons employed were women, many of them service workers and salespersons, and in the professional categories men outnumbered women. Under article 5.e (iv), the Government had pursued a policy of providing health care to all its citizens, with particular emphasis on mother and child care and services for the elderly. It would be helpful if action taken to protect the rights enumerated in article 5 could be described in detail.

62. In connection with article 6, was it correct, as stated in the 1999 country report of the United States Department of State, that the Ombudsman's office which had been established in 1995 and had reviewed 111 cases in 1998 made recommendations to the Government following citizens' complaints, but that its recommendations were often not implemented to the satisfaction of alleged victims of government injustice?

63. In conclusion, the Committee would appreciate some information on the implementation of article 7 of the Convention.

64. The CHAIRMAN stressed how difficult it was to discuss the situation in a State in the absence of any written report and without the country delegation's presence. The Committee might wish to ask Mrs. Sadiq Ali to prepare a recommendation or statement to be adopted at a later stage, with a view to submitting it to the mission of the State party in New York, along with a request for the initial report to be submitted as soon as possible.

65. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.